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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the results of a project designed to gather data that the Library Media Coordinators of DeKalb County (Georgia) Schools can use to evaluate several aspects of online searching in the county's secondary schools. The project, involving responses from library media specialists (LMSs) from 24 DeKalb secondary schools (5 junior high schools and 19 high schools), sought answers to the following research questions: (1) Is the amount budgeted per school for CLASSMATE online searching adequate? (2) How is online searching being used in each school and with what results? (3) What is the general feeling or perception of the LMSs toward its use? (4) Are more inservices or staff development programs needed in this area for LMSs and/or teachers? and (5) What can be done at the district level to enhance the use of online searching for the students? Overall, the report reveals that LMSs had a positive attitude toward online searching. Responses to the questionnaire, however, indicate improvements are needed in training LMSs and teachers in online service usage. The CLASSMATE Online Searching questionnaire and cover letter are appended. (GLR)

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Patricia W. Pickard

May 29, 1991

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LIBRARY MEDIA COORDINATOR PROJECT: ONLINE SEARCHING

Introduction

The primary role of the Library Media Supervisor or Coordinator includes curriculum management, personnel administration and program administration. As Bingham reminded us in "Components of Effective Supervision at the District Level" from School Media Quarterly, Spring 1979, "It is essential that the supervisor know thoroughly the conditions and problems with which the librarians must cope each day in implementing the currently adopted instructional program" (p. 192). Bingham went on to speak of the "gathering of feedback information with which to assess the validity of objectives, determining needed program modification if present objectives are to be continued, and determining whether or not present objectives need to be modified" (p. 203). This information can be gathered in several ways including direct observation and survey questionnaires.

Therefore, the purpose of this project was to gather data that could be used by the Library Media Coordinators of DeKalb County Schools to evaluate several aspects of online searching in the county's secondary schools. Each of the twenty-four schools is given an allotment of $360.00 per year to pay for searches done in the KNOWLEDGE-INDEX/CLASSMATE program, a subset of databases in the DIALOG system designed for use in schools. An initial outlay of capital was spent on providing computers, modems, and telecommunication software for

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each school in 1988. Even though CLASSMATE online searching is not the only use of this equipment, it is the only use that requires ongoing expenditures of any size at $15.00 per hour of use.

This project attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. Is the amount budgeted per school for CLASSMATE online searching adequate?
2. How is online searching being used in each school and with what results?
3. What is the general feeling or perception of the library media specialists (LMS) toward its use?
4. Are more inservices or staff development programs needed in this area for the library media specialists (LMS) and/or teachers.
5. What can be done at the district level to enhance the use of online searching for the students?

To gather information to answer the above questions, a survey of fifteen questions and space for optional comments was devised and sent to the library media specialists in the twenty-four DeKalb secondary schools (five junior highs and nineteen high schools) in April, 1991. A copy of the initial cover letter, the follow-up request, and the survey are attached. By the second deadline, 24 surveys (100%) had been returned.

Analysis of Data

Research question #1 was addressed by the first question on the survey. The average amount spent by the end of April for the 1990-91 school year was $116. The range was from $260 to $.0. Both the highest and the lowest amounts were reported by junior highs. Three senior highs reported $250 each.

Survey questions 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 focused on how online searching is used and with what results in the schools (research question #2). Seventeen (70.8%) respondents checked "subject classes" as the setting for teaching online searching. Six of these also checked "one-on-one." Only four respondents use the one-on-one teaching method exclusively. Two teach one-on-one and also instruct in library/study skills classes, while three checked all three settings.

The type of "subject classes" data was given in the answer to survey question 10. The terms "AP," "advanced," and "Impact," the name of the gifted program in DeKalb, were used by ten (58%) of the seventeen respondents who checked "subject classes" to describe the level of the classes where online searching is taught. Thirteen respondents listed courses in English and/or social studies. Six of these also listed some form of science classes. Only three LMS listed computer science courses while three others merely listed grade levels such as 10th, 11th, 12th.

In fifteen (62.5%) of DeKalb schools, a manual paper search is required before an online search is done. One of the respondents who checked "no" noted that it is not a requirement at her school as the question implies, but one is usually done first. Another who checked "yes" added that the unit plan or lesson plan determines the approach.

Survey questions 6, 7, and 8 are all interrelated. The topics searched determine the databases that are used. The databases used affect the percentage of citations retrieved and in what journals, periodicals, etc. the article can be found. Magazine Index (MAGA1) and ASAP, the full text database of approximately 100 of the 400 publications indexed in MAGA1 were listed as either first or second in use by 20 (83.3%) of the respondents. The various news services were

listed in the top three by fifteen (62.5%). Sixteen (76%) of the twenty-one respondents who answered survey question 7, reported that the school media center is the place where the students find most of the citations. One of these also checked "public library," another checked "academic library," and two added a fourth selection, "Fernbank Science Center." Four high school media specialists checked "academic library" only, and one junior high checked "public library" only.

Even though Magazine Index is quite similar to Reader's Guide in its popular newstand-type magazine coverage, and this is the type ordered by schools, ten (45%) of the twenty-two respondents who answered question 8 said that less than 25% of the citations retrieved were available in their media center. Six (27%) checked "25 to 50%," and six (27%) checked "51 to 74%." One of these respondents commented in the margin that the reason for their high rate was, "Because we primarily use magazine databases." Another of these six (51-74%) commented, "Using full text (databases), we get more of them." From this same group, another respondent's note implied that full text databases are used to insure a hit and that they also have a good collection of periodicals on microfiche including TOM (Text on Microform put out by Information Access along with InfoTrac).

Data for research question #3 was obtained in survey questions 2, 11, and 13. Nineteen respondents (79%) felt that the intent of online searching instruction in their school is to introduce the concept, to provide online searches, and to assist students in locating materials not available in the media center. For question 11, fourteen (58%) of the respondents reported none or very little impact of online searching on collection development. Of the ten (41.6%) who noted some type of

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impact, six stated that the impact was in the form of revision of their magazine/periodical holdings or current information sources. One LMS was more specific and noted the impactin the social science area of the collection. This was the implication of statements by at least two others.

Twenty-two (91.6%) listed at least one drawback for survey question 13. The most frequently noted drawback at 68% was "TIME." Both time for one-on-one and class instruction, which can take as many as three class meetings, were included. One LMS put it this way, "Time, theirs and mine." Five respondents cited their view that online searching was beyond the needs and ability of their students. Four listed the drawback that text of the citations retrieved were not available in the media center. Four others commented that having only one searching station and/or its location in their media center were drawbacks. Three felt that their training was too basic. They could not handle in-depth searches, and keeping up with the changing databases was noted as difficult. One commented that she does searches so seldom that she forgets how.

Research question #4 was reflected in survey questions 4, 12, 14, and 15. Also related was question 13 where three LMS implied that they were not trained for in-depth searches. Seven (29%) listed this as a recommendation for improving training in question 12.
Sixteen (66.6%) checked "yes" in question 12 stating that their training was adequate. However, of these, eight also listed ways to improve the training. More hands-on practice was recommended by three. This was also the recommendation of three (50%) of the LMS who checked "no" for

question 12. Two LMS checked both "yes" and "no." Both listed more practice and more in-depth training as improvements.

Survey questions 14 and 15 were added to give LMS some input into other possible databases of which they might be aware through course work, professional reading, and professional meetings. A memo dated Jan. 9, 1990, from Frank Winstead gave information for using the Atlanta Journal Constitution database in the VU/TEXT databank by registering with TUG (BellSouth TranstexT Universal Gateway). The memo stated, "Please think of yourself as having a $150 allotment for this service." Only three LMS listed VU/TEXT as other databases used in question 14. One of these commented that her school had been given by their Partner in Education free unlimited searching on VU/TEXT. She found it very difficult to use when searching the Atlanta Journal Constitution database, however. Fourteen (58.3%) listed "none" or did not answer the question 14. Interest in exploring other databases (question 15) was divided. Ten (41.6%) checked "yes." WilsonLine and Atlanta Journal Constitution were the only suggestion given by these. Thirteen (54.1%) checked "no." Two of these respondents indicated that they would be interested in exploring more CD ROM products instead of online databases. This sentiment was also expressed by two respondents who checked "yes."

The second part of research question #4 concerning inservices for teachers was answered in survey question 4. Only four LMS have given an inservice on online searching to their faculty this year. Three of these were by departments. The one full staff inservice was voluntary and was scheduled, but had not yet taken place at the date of this survey deadline. This LMS noted that she had only spent $70 to date,

but after the inservice, "We are going to go great guns for the rest of the year." A phone call to this LMS at the end of the year is in order to assess the success of the inservice.

Besides the indirect implications of the question dealing with more training for the LMS and inservices for teachers, research question #5 was addressed in survey question 9. Eighteen (75%) agreed that the establishment of a union list of serials in the DeKalb system with an adopted interlibrary loan policy would be useful to them. One LMS commented that she had developed such a list as an innovative project and updated it for two years before it became too difficult to continue. LRC at Jim Cherry Center could not take it on at the time, and the introduction of InfoTrac in some of the schools made the need less acute.

Most of the "Additional Comments" have been noted where they apply in the above data analysis narration. One LMS would like to observe where CLASSMATE is really utilized. She stated, "I realize I'm not using it to the best advantage - a good resource." Another LMS commented that the searches she has seen done in the DeKalb County schools could have been done on InfoTrac. "Therefore, why are we spending this extra money?" A third LMS wrote, "I have decided that teaching remote searching requires more time than either the librarian, the students or our teachers have, except for a few. I would not like to see it dropped altogether, but I don't think it is something that can be forced on anyone." This LMS along with three others reported more of an interest in CD ROM indexes.

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Conclusion

In 1988, Kay Rogers, a LMS completing her Ed.S. degree at GSU, did her research paper on online searching in schools. Due to the fact that this technology was brand new in the school setting, she had to do a national survey to find enough schools using the technology for her data. At the time of this project, DeKalb schools had had the technology for only three years. The results of her study are very similar in several respects to the findings related above in the data analysis. The major findings of the GSU study which are directly related to findings of this study include:

a). The greatest drawback to online searching was the amount of time required by the LMS to conduct searches and instruct students. "Time" was the biggest drawback listed by 91.6% of the DeKalb LMS.

b). Instruction occurred most often in a one-on-one situation with the LMS and the student. Ms. Rogers' frequency rate for this was 86 from her sample of 113 LMS. The frequency for class instruction was 55. In DeKalb, the frequency rate for one-on-one and subject classes were 15 and 20 respectively. This can be due to the fact that CLASSMATE provides classroom teaching materials and student handbooks.

c). The segment of the collection most affected was periodicals - more were used and more were being purchased. Only ten (41.6%) of the DeKalb LMS noted some impact on their collection. Six of these stated that the impact was in the

form of revision of magazine holdings or current information sources.

d.) Less than 25% of the references retrieved could be located in the school media center, yet students used the school media center more than any other location to find materials from online searches. Academic libraries ranked second. In DeKalb, 54% of the respondents reported more than a 25% rate. Comments from this group reflected the fact that.magazine databases and full text databases were used to guarantee success. The school media center was reported as the place where citations where found by 76% of the DeKalb LMS. Only 23.8% reported the use of academic libraries, but this was in second place.

Conclusions and implications for decision making by the Library Media Coordinators of DeKalb can be drawn from the data used to answer the five research questions in the following ways:

#1. Is the amount budgeted per school for CLASSMATE online searching adequate?

With the average expenditure of $116 through April, the amounts of $360 and $150 for VU/TEXT were more than adequate in every case this year. However, records available to the Coordinators for the 1989-90 school year show that two schools did exceed this amount. Because the allotment is not a separate category in the total media center allotment, the LMS is free to exceed the amount. This gives flexibility to those who use it. At the same time, no one is forced to use it or lose it as was the case the first year DeKalb introduced

CLASSMATE. This change was a good decision by the Coordinators.

#2. How is online searching used in each school and with what results?

DeKalb's use follows the trend found in the literature on the subject by being taught 58% of the time to subject classes of advanced, gifted, or upper level students. The term "college bound" is found in the literature. As noted earlier, DeKalb's use is quite similar to the national data reported in the GSU study. The fact that 62.5% reported that a manual search is required before going online points to a possible factor concerning the lack of use. A committee of LMS could be appointed to look at this and other factors and perhaps devise a written policy of use to be adopted by the county.

#3. What is the general feeling or perception of the library media specialists toward it use?

Nineteen respondents (79%) felt that the intent of online searching instruction in their school is to introduce the concept, to provide online searches, and to assist students in locating materials not available in the school media center. However, data reported on the use reflect success due to the fact that the databases used were limited to magazine sources and full text sources to insure a larger percentage of articles that could be found in the existing school collection. The references to InfoTrac, TOM and NewsBank by various LMS as sources of full text articles appear to suggest a need for these to be in all the schools. This study failed to obtain information to determine which schools have what

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resources. The Coordinators should obtain this information and pursue the possibility of at least providing district funds to purchase the equipment for each school for these sources. This would address the expressed interest in CD ROM products and indexes.

The drawbacks of time and the view that online searching is beyond the needs and ability of their students, leads to a suggestion that could be made by the Coordinators that the DeKalb LMS should rethink their answer to question 2. Perhaps the introduction of the concept is all that is needed in many cases. Searching terms and strategies can be taught more cheaply with a full text CD ROM product such as an electronic encyclopedia. Resoure-based units using CLASSMATE could be planned with the computer application teacher to insure the students' needs and ability. However, it is the researcher's opinion that instruction in online searching is more than teaching the techniques and the technology. Critical thinking skills and evaluation of materials are certainly important by-products of the process.

#4. Are more inservices or staff development programs needed in this area for the library media specialists and /or teachers?

The majority (66.6%) listed that their training was adequate, but 50% of these listed ways to improve the training. More hands-on practice and more in-depth training were the suggestions listed most often. An optional inservice of supervised practice might be considered by the Coordinators. This could be offered at the secondary cluster meetings. The Coordinators should continue to inform the LMS

of any advanced or refresher courses offered by DIALOG/CLASSMATE and encourage attendance by paying the fees from the district budget as is done for new LMS to DeKalb to take the basic training.

Three LMS listed the fact that the teachers are not knowledgeable as a drawback. However, only four LMS had given inservices to their faculty. If LMS do not feel comfortable with giving inservices themselves, they should plan and facilitate them, according to Information Power. The Coordinators should be able to give such an inservice or recommend someone. A staff development course for teachers could be formulated and taught by the Coordinators with the help of the LMS who use the system the most.

#5. What can be done at the district level to enhance the use of online searching for the students?

This has been answered indirectly by the above discussion dealing with training for the LMS and teachers. A more direct impact for the students would be in the form of finding more of the materials needed. Eighteen (75%) of the LMS agreed that a union list of serials and an interlibrary loan policy for the county would be helpful. As the magnet concept is expanded in the county, it stands to reason that the media center collections will begin to be geared toward the magnet emphasis. Thus, the math/science magnet would subscribe to more science periodicals. Due to budget cuts that are already affecting the media centers, sharing of resources is a must. The Coordinators should investigate a way of providing a list that would also include the Professional Library at Jim Cherry

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and Fernbank Science Center. The ultimate would be an online network to this list and the ability to fax the needed articles immediately.

Overall, the library media specialists conveyed a positive attitude toward online searching. As in any new concept in education, there is a lag between theory and practice. The "time" drawback is something that can be overcome by setting priorities. DeKalb is fortunate to have online searching capabilites in all its secondary schools this early in its use. This can be attributed to the visionary leadership at the district level.

CLASSMATE ONLINE SEARCHING QUESTIONNAIE

1. Approximately how much has your school spent on online searching thus far this school year? _____

2. Which statement best describes the intent of online instruction in your school or as you understand it?
   _____ to introduce the concepts of online database searching
   _____ to introduce the concepts of online searching and to provide online searches
   _____ to introduce the concepts of online searching, to provide online searches, and to assist students in locating materials not available in the media center.

3. In which settings is online instruction provided in your school?
   ___library or study skills classes, ___subject classes,
   ___one-on-one to students.

4. Have you given an inservice to your staff on online searching this school year? ___yes, ___full staff, ___by department.
   ___no

5. Must a student have completed a manual literature search before an online search is conducted? ___yes, ___no.

6. In order, what three databases do you search most often?
   _____
   _____
   _____

7. Where do the students locate the majority of the citations retrieved from their search?
   ___school media center, ___public library, ___academic library.

8. What percentage of the citations retrieved are available in your media center? ___less than 25%, ___25 to 50%,
   ___51 to 74%, ___ over 75%

9. Would the establishment of a union list of serials in the DeKalb schools with a written interlibrary loan policy for the system be useful to you? ___ yes, ___no.

10. What classes (grade, subject, level) have been given instruction in online searching this school year? _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

11. What has been the impact, if any, of online searching on your collection development? _____
_____
_____
_____

12. Was your training in online searching adequate? ___yes, ___no. If not, how could it have been improved?_____
_____
_____
_____

13. What drawbacks have you found in teaching/providing online searching to your students? _____
_____
_____
_____

14. Besides DIALOG/CLASSMATE, what other databanks do you use? (Ex. VU/TEXT) _____

15. Would you be interested in exploring the use of other databases?
___ no.
___ yes, Which ones? _____

Additional comments?

Name_____. School_____

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PRINCIPAL

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April 17, 1991

MEMO TO: Junior and Senior High Library Media Specialists

FROM: Pat Pickard, Libray Media Specialist, Sequoyah Jr. H.

REFERENCE: DIALOG/CLASSMATE Online Searching

Here I am again sending out a questionnaire. This one has two purposes. The first is to gather data for a project required for a course I am presently taking at Georgia State, and the second is for information I need to assess my online instructional program, or the lack of one, here at Sequoyah.

Please take a few minutes and answer the questions to the best of your ability. If you, like me, have not done much with online searching, please answer the first two questions and any others for which you have data. I am especially interested if you feel that you need more training, have uninterested faculty, feel that online searching is not appropriate for your students, or any other comments you may have on the subject.

I have sent this to only one Media Specialist in each school with the hope that both will confer, or it will be given to the one who does the most with online searching. In any case, please complete and return the questionnaire to me by Wednesday, May 1, 1991.

Thank you in advance for helping me gather this data.

KENNETH HENNESSY
PRINCIPAL

ROBERT R. FREEMAN
SUPERINTENDENT

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